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From: Ham-Policy Mailing List and Newsgroup <ham-policy@ucsd.edu>  
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Ham-Policy Digest                      Wed, 17 Feb 93                      Volume 93 : Issue    41

Today's Topics:

                    Eliminate the Written Exam  
                    The no-code issue

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Send subscription requests to: <Ham-Policy-REQUEST@UCSD.Edu>  
Problems you can't solve otherwise to brian@ucsd.edu.

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We trust that readers are intelligent enough to realize that all text  
herein consists of personal comments and does not represent the official  
policies or positions of any party. Your mileage may vary. So there.

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Date: Tue, 16 Feb 1993 23:11:16 GMT  
From: mvb.saic.com!unogate!news.service.uci.edu!usc!sdd.hp.com!hpscit.sc.hp.com!  
hplextra!hpl-opus!hpnmdla!alanb@network.UCSD.EDU  
Subject: Eliminate the Written Exam  
To: ham-policy@ucsd.edu

A ham I know, KC6---, is the head of the local club's public service  
activities. She spends countless hours coordinating communications  
for parades, walkathons and races to the benefit of amateur radio  
and the local community. She is also a real nice person. Nobody I  
know would fail to agree that she is a credit to the hobby.

But KC6--- is not a technical person. She admitted to me that she  
views ham equipment the same as her hi-fi. If she needs it fixed, she  
takes it to the shop. Her husband installed the radio in the car for  
her. She was able to memorize enough questions to pass the test, but  
has no further interest in technical subjects.

There must be many people like her who could contribute to amateur  
radio but don't see the point in learning a lot of useless formulas.  
Back in the 1930's, the amateur exam required you to draw a schematic

of your complete ham station and explain its operation to the government examiner. That made sense back then, when nearly everyone built his own station. Nowadays, the technical exam is an anachronism.

But, you say, the exam acts as a "filter" to keep out undesirables! I say, go to any major metropolitan center in the US and tune across the 2 meter band. You know what you're looking for -- every major city has one (or several) -- the "garbage" repeater with foul language, frequent arguments, unidentified transmissions and intentional interference. If the present license exams are acting as a "filter," they sure aren't doing a very good job.

I say, eliminate the written exam entirely. Even the rules and regulations part -- nobody remembers that stuff anyway, and you can always look it up if you need to.

Amateur radio is dying on the vine -- we are becoming a hobby of old men. Young kids typically don't have much trouble with the code exam, but the written exam can be a real barrier. If we are to protect our frequencies before the FCC and Congress, we need to increase our numbers, and eliminating the written exam would be a giant step in that direction.

By the way, all these arguments hold equally well for the code exam. If you believe the code exam should be eliminated, then the same arguments hold for the written exam as well.

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Date: 16 Feb 93 16:54:14 GMT  
From: news-mail-gateway@ucsd.edu  
Subject: The no-code issue  
To: ham-policy@ucsd.edu

Dana H. Myers KK6JQ says:

Ham radio is a service chartered by the FCC with a number of goals.

I say:

I would say that amateur radio is much bigger than this.

In other countries throughout the world, where FCC does not regulate amateur radio, for example the UK, there is no specification or charter for amateur radio. Amateurs just follow the guidelines and rules set down for them. The ITU definition of amateur radio just says that

messages we transmit are so unimportant that we wouldn't use another service to transmit them.

The licencing systems are just a way governments try to protect themselves and other radio services from interference. That's why we have exams, licences and unique callsigns. There is no other reason. That's the original reason for an international code requirement (so we could understand that we had interfered with someone and had to QRT). There was also a political reason: the code requirement meant that the PTT (then a government monopoly) wouldn't lose out to people chatting internationally on the amateur service rather than using the phone. Just on this basis the code requirement is bogus today. Long distance communication is possible for no-codes on 6m and using satellites. The code is obsolete outside the amateur service in the first world, disappearing in the second.

Governments find us useful in times of war (the only reason the US allowed hams back on the air after 1919 was because they needed more WT ops -- the army was woefully behind the times) and in times of emergency. That's why they still tolerate us (plus the political effect of half a million votes in the US).

The real reason we do amateur radio is because it's fun (I had a ball doing QRP portable last weekend) and it's interesting. It's perhaps time the licencing requirements reflected this.

In the future the rules are going to fall further and further out of sync with reality -- digital modes are already showing this (paradoxes of the form: you can't transmit music, but you can transmit a sound file containing music).

72 Kevin N7WIM / G8UDP  
a-kevinp@microsoft.com

"We conjure the spirits of the computer with our spells"

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End of Ham-Policy Digest V93 #41

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